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DE RUEHIN #1387 2660614
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 220614Z SEP 08
FM AIT TAIPEI
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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. AND TAIWAN'S UN BID

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave extensive coverage September 20-22 to a well-known Taiwan food processing company, some of whose products were found to have been tainted with melamine from China; and to the story of a China Airlines passenger jet that encountered turbulence on its way from Taipei to Bali, Indonesia, on Saturday and lost altitude abruptly, resulting in injuries to around 30 passengers. In addition, all major Chinese-language and English-language dailies in Taiwan carried a statement by the U.S. Mission to the UN (USUN) last Wednesday that expressed support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UN specialized agencies. The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" ran a news story on page ten Saturday with the headline "In a Rare Move, the United States Expresses Support for Taiwan's UN Bid; Supporting Taiwan to Become an Observer at WHA; Presidential Office: [Taiwan's] Pragmatic Diplomacy Has Earned Recognition." The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" also ran a banner headline on page eight Saturday reading "United States: Support Taiwan's Participation in UN Specialized Agencies." In terms of editorials and commentaries, an "Apple Daily" editorial said the USUN statement showed that President Ma Ying-jeou's cross-Straits policy has allayed Washington's concerns on this issue, prompting the United States' "goodwill gesture." End summary.

"U.S.-Style Goodwill Gesture"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (9/20):

"The U.S. Mission to the UN issued a statement expressing strong support for Taiwan's participation in UN specialized agencies, and the statement particularly mentioned [Taiwan's observer status] in the World Health Assembly. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte also complimented Taiwan's recent efforts in engaging in dialogue with China. ...

"All these have clearly indicated the United States' principles: Namely, that the United States is willing to support Taiwan's participation in the peripheral agencies of the UN, but there are two prerequisites: First, [these agencies] must be of a nature which does not require statehood; and second, Taiwan must engage in dialogue with China rather than seeking independence and resistance [against Beijing]. Such are the sufficient conditions, though not essential ones, for the United States to support Taiwan's participation in the [UN] peripheral agencies. President Ma's cross-Straits policy has freed Washington from concern, and it therefore released its goodwill gesture. But still, Ma needs to understand clearly that his discretion [in terms of cross-Straits relations], of not going too far or not far enough, will help to reassure the Taiwan people."

YOUNG